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Analysis of Bloggers' Usage of the Web Space in Kyrgyzstan to Engage Civically and Politically

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The University of Southern Mississippi

ANALYSIS OF BLOGGERS' USAGE OF WEB SPACE IN KYRGYZSTAN TO
ENGAGE CIVICALLY AND POLITICALLY

by

Bahtiyar Kurambayev

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
Of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2015

ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS OF BLOGGERS' USAGE OF THE WEB SPACE IN KYRGYZSTAN TO ENGAGE CIVICALLY AND POLITICALLY

by Bahtiyar Kurambayev

December 2015

This dissertation work seeks to assess the implications of the internet (blogging) in non-democratic Kyrgyz Republic for engaging civically and politically. Existing literature offers contradictory findings about the role of internet in non-democratic countries and Kyrgyz Republic is one of those non-western countries that have been overlooked. To understand how the internet may relate to engagement civically and politically, the author applies survey approach and in-depth interviews to examine the relationship between the internet and engagement by specifically looking at how Kyrgyz bloggers use the web space.

The sample is drawn from student population. The author collected online 132 responses during the period of January 19, 2015 and March 6, 2015 via Qualtrics surveys. The survey was offered in Kyrgyz, Russian, and English languages.

This research identified that politically active internet users tend to be active offline as well. There was, however, no relationship between civic engagements online with offline. This study sought to know whether gender mattered in how Kyrgyz internet users blogged. Gender played a role in political engagement that men bloggers were more active politically than women bloggers. All other gender analysis revealed no significant differences. This is believed to be the first research examining bloggers in Kyrgyzstan and offers some knowledge about internet users of Kyrgyz Republic. It is expected that

the findings would help to understand on the impact of contemporary internet use and perhaps add a fresh perspective that challenges the dominating scientific knowledge coming from the western world (Dutton, 2013).

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The University of Southern Mississippi

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TO ENGAGE CIVICALLY AND POLITICALLY

by

Bahtiyar Kurambayev

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
and the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral degree to my beloved wife, Baktygul Zhumadilova, and my family in Turkmenistan who have endured my absence for several years, and my friends who have provided the support I needed to complete this goal. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research study was to offer analysis of student bloggers' usage of the web space (blog) in Kyrgyzstan to engage civically and politically. The primary reason this study was necessary was because the internet has become increasingly an object of interest difficult to ignore for academics and practitioners in mass communication and other social science disciplines because of "drastic changes in how media content are organized, created and distributed within just the past generation" (Schultz & Sheffer, 2009a, p. 371).

Recent developments such as major uprisings in foreign countries including Jordan and Algeria occurred while rulers have been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt. Elsewhere in Africa and Ukraine experienced the largest revolution when hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets demanding the country's presidents resign. All of them challenged the repressive, anti-democratic nature of their regimes (International Crisis Group, 2011). Some of these countries were among the world's top "enemies of the internet" identified by Reporters Without Borders (2013).

What is striking about these waves of uprisings and mass protests was that the internet, specifically user generated website platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Blogspot, etc., along with its users, played an important role in communicating and organizing the rise of opposition being able to bypass state controlled media outlets (Cottle, 2011).

Existing literature also offers contradictory findings about the role of the internet in non-democratic countries. “Much of the present excitement about the internet, particularly the high hopes that are pinned on it in terms of opening up closed societies, stems from selective and, at times, incorrect readings of history” (Morozov, 2012, p. xi). Therefore, authoritarian rulers understand the power of the internet and are actively trying to control it. International media watchdog organizations, for example, regularly place countries like Burma, Cuba, and North Korea among countries that have absolute control over it and restrict access to internet to a very small segment of the population. Other countries, such as China, Iran, and Tunisia, may use it for economic growth but they may not allow ordinary people to use it for political purposes (Calingaert, 2010). For example, in Egypt, internet users alerted about the political grooming of former President Mubarak’s son to take over the leadership of the country, or about the police indifference to sexual harassment of girls in the streets of Cairo. Some were arrested and jailed (Russell & Echchaibi, 2009). Former Soviet Union Republic of Tajikistan asserts pressure on internet users critical of the government and blocks popular websites (Transitions Online, 2013). According to Parry (2012), the security agency of Kyrgyz Republic launched a system to monitor the internet users for their comments of “content liable to incite hatred on the ground of ethnicity, religion, and even regional origin” that would lead to increased government surveillance and censorship (Transitions Online, para. 1). Former CNN journalist and blogger, Rebecca McKinnon, wanted to test Chinese government’s control over internet user’s comments. Specifically, she wanted to test how much time Chinese internet monitors would need to delete her own comments. What she

did was to set up anonymous accounts in 2008 on local blog platforms of China. Then, she published many posts involving various issues including some controversial, such as Tibet or AIDS, corruption in China. The most controversial ones were deleted half of all posts while some were censored (MacKinnon, 2013). This is why many governments apply different methods and laws to manipulate online discussions and imprison those who criticize government policies (Calingaert, 2010). In his work “Authoritarianism vs. The Internet,” Calingaert said that Iran established a department of special internet monitors to take care of the regime’s critics. Morozov (2012) argues that many factors may explain the persistence of some authoritarian government including having little or no previous experience with democratic rule of law.

Imagine building censorship systems that are as detailed and fine-tuned to the information needs of their users as the behavior advertising we encounter every day. The only difference between the two is that one system learns everything about us to show us more relevant advertisement, while the other learns everything about us to ban us from accessing relevant pages (Morozov, 2012, p. 97)

In many parts of the world, people cannot, without fear, interact and say what they want online. Global internet discourse is distorted by state intimidation and censorship (Curran, J., 2012, as cited in Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012, p.11). All of these abovementioned examples could demonstrate how authoritarian country leaders may act in situations where internet users offer critical comments and discuss controversial subjects including through blogging. China has more internet monitors than

soldiers (Internews, 2013). These developments heightened the need for examining the role of new communication technologies especially internet and its wider implications for democratization (or lack of it).

Significance of the Study

Hence, extensive research has been undertaken in the role of internet (including other types of new communication technologies) in several regions in the world and in countries, however, no single study adequately covers former Soviet Union Kyrgyzstan. Freedman and Shafer (2012) noted that scholars have barely scratched the surface in studying Kyrgyzstan among the other four countries that make up Central Asia region in general. It may partly be explained that Kyrgyzstan (sometimes known as Kyrgyz Republic) has been closed to outsiders of the world. Kyrgyzstan along with other Central Asian countries was rarely studied other than by Soviet researchers. The Soviet government actively discouraged and impeded research (Freedman & Shafer, 2012). Soviet researchers were often forced to censor and manipulate their own findings (Tucker, 2014). Those who dared to trespass to undertake independent research risked loss of their jobs, freedom, and even lives (Freedman & Shafer, 2012). The country has opened up after its independence in 1991. Still, peer review is almost entirely absent in most academic journals of Central Asia and therefore much published work in Central Asia inclusive of Kyrgyzstan scholarship suffers from low quality. Some Central Asian scholars studied abroad and publish their work in international journals. They understand peer review procedures, but they are a minority (Shamatov, Schatz, & Niyozov, 2010).

Overall, Kyrgyzstan is isolated from the rest of the academic world, says Andrew Wachtel, former Dean of Graduate School at Northwestern University (AUCA, 2013).

Another possible explanation that no single study exists about Kyrgyzstan's blogging sphere could be that researchers in the past experienced difficulties in undertaking scholarly work in the country. Freedman (2009) reported having difficulties because some subjects in Kyrgyzstan because of perceived potential governmental or other retaliation. Aksartova (2003) noted that she faced extreme unwillingness to be interviewed even among members of non-governmental organizations and international organizations functioning in the Kyrgyzstan citing 'interview fatigue' caused by feelings of exploitation by foreign researchers and doubts that such cooperation does little if anything toward 'development of the capacity for local knowledge production' (pp. 14–15).

Thus, this dissertation work hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge about perceived social and political changes (or lack of) among internet users in the former Soviet Union Kyrgyzstan as a result of internet penetration. Practical implications of this dissertation work is that the knowledge obtained as a result of this study can help international funders – NGOs, foreign governments, multi-government agencies, universities, and foundations- that train journalists, subsidize media outlets, and provide equipment and advice to the news organizations to design and assess their activities. Research also can be valuable for domestic and foreign investors and companies that may launch, acquire or merge news outlets, including online and social media (Freedman & Shafer, 2012, p. 120).

The sample of bloggers was drawn from student population attending any higher educational institutions (colleges, institutes, and universities) in Kyrgyz Republic as long as students had a functioning blog. For this study purposes, those student bloggers attending universities in the country but were from other countries were ineligible.

Millions of people have created a blogging account since it appeared early 1990s (Chen, 2011b) and many more people are still creating each day on a variety of blogging platforms. Blogging software is relatively easy to use because it is based on ‘what you see is what you get’ principles, allowing users to manipulate formats with no knowledge of programming language (Pole, 2010). The entry costs to blogging are relatively low. Anyone can blog these days. The only requirements are having access to internet and computer and having some basic computer skills. Blog readers can respond easily to posts through the comment section, again, without special knowledge. They can type up their response and hit “post reply.” “Because bloggers are not beholden to anyone, they have more latitude as to what they can do and when they can do it” (p. 14). In this way, blogs are a departure from traditional oversight groups as well as the media. Alongside traditional modes of participation, blogging revolutionized civic engagement. Many blogs have challenged the traditional media (Schultz & Sheffer, 2009). Bloggers can organize marches, protests, or rallies using their blogs, that later occur in real life (Pole, 2010). For example, bloggers can raise awareness through posts, or circulate e-petitions, and sometimes solicit contributions. This is what Pole called “online mobilization effort.” He argued that these efforts are translated into offline forms of participation including marches, rallies.

The impact of blogging on political and civic engagement has not been examined systematically (Pole, 2010). Some scholars argue that the flow of information is democratized through blogging while others assert that blogs hinder democratic debate because they attract a homogenous audience whose purpose is to push their own point of view (Dahlgren, 2005; Kaye, Johnson, & Muhlberge., 2012; Sunstein, 2007; Xenos, 2008). There are some other researchers who offer mixed opinions about whether blogs offer democratization. At this moment, it might be too early to assess the impact of blogging or internet in general regarding the engagement civically and politically (Putnam, 2000). Drawing upon existing literature about blogging, this study investigates the context in Kyrgyzstan.

Background of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a former Soviet Union nation and has population of five million citizens. It is located in Central Asia bordering Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. All of these are former Soviet Union countries. Kyrgyzstan also shares a border with China. Kyrgyzstan (sometimes known as Kyrgyz Republic) is a democratic parliamentary republic with the new constitution adopted after a revolution in April 2010, which resulted in the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev fleeing the country. Official languages are Kyrgyz and Russian. Kyrgyzstan is singled out in this study because the researcher has extensive knowledge about Kyrgyzstan to offer some insightful discussion.

Kyrgyzstan has recently seen its two presidents overthrown due to a popular uprising, numerous riots and reports of ethnic clashes. Kyrgyzstan is considered to be the most unstable country in the region of South-Central Asia and is vulnerable to internal and external factors to further destabilize the country. Examples of internal and external factors could be terrorists and potential riots of rival regions of south and north in the country and interethnic conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbek minorities. During the Soviet period from 1920 to 1990, the Kyrgyz developed its education system. The Soviet Union, however, was an “oligarchy, in which a handful of party elites set key economic, military and social policies without reference to public opinion” (Oates, 2012, p. 461). All media were owned by the state and viewed as central instruments in inculcating the masses with Communist ideology. “No foreign media that criticized the Soviet state were allowed, and radio signals from pro-Western stations such as Voice of America and Radio Liberty were routinely jammed” (pp. 461-462).

The Kyrgyz language belongs to Turkic group of languages. This group also includes Turkmen, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Azerbaijan. According to the website of U.S Department of State, Cyrillic script was adopted in Kyrgyzstan in early 1940s (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

The early years of glasnost (the policy of more open government and wider dissemination of information, initiated by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s) did not change the political environment in the country (Anderson, 1999). However, Anderson argues that press was permitted to adopt a more liberal stance and to establish a new publication, Literaturny Kirghizstan (Literature of Kyrgyzstan), by the

country's Union of Writers. After the independence from Soviet Union in 1991, this Central Asian nation gained a reputation as an "island of democracy" (Anderson, 1999).

In October 1991, Kyrgyzstan held its first presidential elections since its independence from the Soviet Union and Askar Akayev became the first president of the republic. During the first term of presidency, Akayev frequently spoke about the need to move forward with democratization of the country by guaranteeing civil and political rights. He changed the country's constitution to meet international standards and introduced a privatization program that allowed people to own small and medium size enterprises that had belonged to Kyrgyz government. However, the program was suspended in 1997 following allegations of fraud. On December 24, 1995, President Akayev was re-elected for another 5-year term. As time went by, Akayev consolidated his power and became increasingly authoritarian and paternalistic. He wanted to further extend his presidential power, claiming that he had no more power than the Queen of England (Anderson, 1999). Anderson also noted that the presidential family members were actively involved in business. In the presidential election of 2000, Akayev was elected for a third term, but the elections were neither free nor fair, according to international observers (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003). However, Akayev had to flee because of massive protests against his poor leadership in March 2005 in solving widespread poverty in the country. These series of protests were labeled as "Tulip Revolution" in most international news coverage (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007). Following the coup, Akayev fled to Kazakhstan and then to Russia. However, Akayev accused the Bush administration of funding the Kyrgyz opposition and bringing his

downfall since it was opposed to his increasingly close relations with Kremlin [Moscow]. He singled out western non-governmental organizations, particularly Freedom House, for “introducing the concept and practice of democracy in Kyrgyzstan without taking into account the republic’s history and culture” (Hiro, 2009, p. 306).

On March 25, 2005, the day after Akayev fled Bishkek, the opposition leaders formed an interim government under Kurmanbek Bakiyev as acting president and prime minister. During the election campaign, he vowed to reform the constitution, including curtailing presidential authority, and eradicate corruption. In the poll, he won 89 percent of the vote. After occupying the presidential palace, Bakiyev forgot his promises of constitutional reform and eradication of corruption. Instead, he tried to “divert popular attention away by threatening in April 2006 to expel American troops if the Pentagon did not increase its rent for the Manas Air Base by June 1, 2006” (Hiro, 2009, p. 306).

The studies of internet implications in Kyrgyzstan particularly blogging are scarce. Some studies focus on understanding demographics, others focus on internet users’ identity and impact of revolutions on media freedom. Srinivasan’s (2009) research examined the reasons activists and journalists blog, however, there is no research examining the motives of blogging of college students. Especially, almost 80 percent of internet users happen to be 35 years old or younger (Srinivasan & Fish, 2009). This particular study should have significance because of its relevance to social change. Some scholars describe blogging as extended public journalism or multimedia freedom of expression in which anyone can become a part of it (Benkler, 2006; 2008, Russell & Echnaibi, 2009).

Several reasons exist for targeting student bloggers for this dissertation. First, current college students in Kyrgyzstan are among the first generation after the collapse of Soviet Union who grew up with access to internet and other communication technologies (Ibold, 2010). Second, once young people are engaged politically and civically, they continue to be active throughout their lives (Dalton, 2008; Plutzer, 2002). Young people are especially more likely to use online for political information (Hamilton & Tolbert, 2012). Kirmso (2010) concluded that young citizens of Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian nations tend to be eager to experiment and challenge existing norms and expectation. Kirmso also concluded that these young people stand at the cutting edge of globalization and post-Soviet change, and they offer new perspectives. After all, it is impossible to cover all of the blogosphere. It is too big, too dynamic, and too responsive to change for anyone to say about it beyond “this is what I found in this particular place at that particular time” (Barlow, 2008, p. ix). Also, it is believed that this is the first study and serves as a valuable source of information for future research focusing on growing “digital native” generation of a Central Asian nation, since the region itself is so often overlooked. Some years ago, Klotz (2004) wrote that no work on the internet should be complete without a consideration of the situation outside the United States. Data are still scarce from some countries and regions (Howard, 2008). Thus, research in non-western countries (including Kyrgyz Republic) might add a fresh perspective that challenges the dominating scientific knowledge coming from the western world relative to blogs (Dutton, 2013).

Definitions

While a variety of definitions of the term blog have been suggested, this dissertation used the definition first suggested by Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) that blog is a frequently updated webpage. Blog posts are primarily textual, but they may contain photos, or other multimedia content. They may also contain links to other websites and allow readers to interact with the audience by commenting.

Civic Engagement refers to the definition used by Leung (2009) that combines four concepts to constitute civic engagement such as individual's media attentiveness, subjective assessment of internal and external political efficacy and interest in public affairs.

Online Political Engagement refers to the definition of political engagement suggested below but applying this definition to online world.

Online Civic Engagement refers to the above mentioned definition by taking place online.

Political Engagement refers to the definition suggested by Verba and Nie (1987) that those activities by those private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing that selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The key research questions of this study were:

RQ1: Is there any relationship between online political engagements with offline political engagement?

RQ2: Is there any relationship between online civic engagements with offline civic engagement?

RQ3: Does gender play a role in how Kyrgyz students blog?

Based on the insights gained from the existing literature, the following hypothesis was tested:

H1: The length of blogging is correlated to civic engagement. That is, the longer period of time (weeks, months, years) one has blogged, the more engaged he/she is civically.

H2: The length of blogging is correlated to political engagement. That is, the longer period of time (weeks, months, and years) one uses blogging, the more engaged he/she is politically.

Existing literature suggests that frequency and the length of internet use increases accidental exposure to information, and such exposure is associated with more knowledge of politics and current affairs (Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex, 2001) even for those who are uninterested (Hamilton & Tolbert, 2012).

H3: There is a positive correlation between being engaged civically and being engaged politically.

RQ4: Which uses and gratification need do Kyrgyz student bloggers indicate is the main reason he/she blogs the most?

Delimitations

This study was limited to student bloggers from Kyrgyzstan. Potential subject must have a functioning blog in any language and be registered student at a university.

Foreign students studying at Kyrgyz universities were ineligible. This was done to keep the focus on student bloggers from Kyrgyzstan.

The structure of the study

The overall structure of the research takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter two begins by laying background information about mass media in Kyrgyzstan along with brief country profile, and it also looks at the existing literature about blogging in greater detail. Chapter three focuses on the methodology used in this study. Chapter four analyzes the results of surveys undertaken during the course of the research and includes the discussion of the implications of the findings to future research into blogosphere. Furthermore, this chapter identified the limitations. The final chapter draws upon the discussion and conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study attempted to contribute to the growing scholarship about the role of the internet in authoritarian Kyrgyzstan where free expression is curtailed and news outlets are under official government censorship. The Soviet rule isolated Kyrgyzstan and the wider Central Asian region (Kirmse, 2010), however, this area is opening up itself to the outside world. Digital and social media may fulfill a crucial role for citizens in Kyrgyzstan that is similar to most Westerners who have privilege in free expression without fear of persecution.

Mass Media in Kyrgyzstan

The country's constitution adopted in 2010 offers full protection for freedom of expression, speech, press and information, mass media, however, are government controlled and censored. The system of control over mass media outlets in the Kyrgyzstan dates back to the soviet years when journalists were considered agents of the government propaganda. The Soviet Union used the mass media in an authoritarian manner to support its ideology; thus eliminating dissenting voices. That is why the university-level journalism education in Kyrgyzstan still continues to be Soviet-style pedagogy (Freedman, 2007), and incumbent editors and reporters largely continue the interpretive and persuasive reporting practices of the Soviet era (Freedman, 2012). Facts were not distinguished from commentary, and the information was not balanced, says the report from International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) study undertaken in 2013. A few private news outlets exist in the country. However, these private news

outlets self-censor as a survival and thus avoid any critical and controversial issues. IREX research argues that Kyrgyz mass media outlets typically have taboo topics or personae non grata who are the frequent targets of criticism along with bias for certain public figures and politicians to whom media is loyal (IREX, 2013). The IREX research report also notes some widespread practice of attacking professional journalists not only from “regular people” but also from the government side. For example, the report outlines when a journalist was recording Kyrgyz security officers storming a government building when local reporters were beaten up by officers before taking the tape and smashing their camera. On another example, the report notes, “one police officer struck the correspondent of an online news outlet on the correspondent’s head with his police night stick while the correspondent was taking photographs of a stun grenade lying on the ground.” On other instances police were called, but they sometimes show up and sometimes they fail to do so. Sometimes they do not even intervene after being called upon. The government formally blocks certain news websites under the parliamentary order for “subjective reporting” while other times the government completely shuts down certain news outlets (IREX, 2013).

In his research, Freedman (2012) discusses the consequences for someone to be an independent reporter in this small Central Asian nation. Freedman talks about the incidents against independent journalists including murder in 2007 when journalist Alisher Saipov was murdered in Osh city of the country. He also discussed another fatal attack against an independent reporter and editor, Gennady Pavlyuk, who was thrown out of an upper-story window of a 6-floor apartment with legs and arms bound with tape in

2009. The country's prosecutor made official statements in the past that the criminal charges would be opened for anyone spreading unfounded and unverified information. The Prime Minister Babanov and even the President Atambayev demanded greater consequences for journalists guilty of libel or defamation (IREX, 2013). According to IREX research report, one blogger Vladimir Farafonov was indicted under criminal code for his independent reporting on the ground "inciting national, racial, religious or inter-regional hatred" described by certain politicians as poorly reflecting on the Kyrgyz nation (IREX, 2013, p. 262).

Physical assaults and libel suits are among other strategies of the Kyrgyz government against those who wish to practice independent journalism (Freedman, 2012). Other strategies include restricting journalists' access to information. Thus, no wonder why Freedom House, a U.S. based NGO, may have classified Kyrgyzstan as "partly free" country in its 2015 world report. Reporters Without Border (2013) placed Kyrgyzstan in a group of countries where "these countries...face important challenges concerning media independence and the working environment of journalists. The latter are often in the firing line in highly polarized societies and treated as easy prey by a variety of pressure groups" (Reporters Without Borders, para. 13).

Thus, journalists still practice Soviet-style surviving tactic. That is self-censoring rather than producing critical content about government and/or other officials (EurasiaNet.org, 2013). Even the category of the media, which was formally called independent, was forcibly supervised by officials with the help of criminal libel legislation and administrative resources (Freedman, 2012, p. 847). Under such a

restrictive environment, there are two avenues for anti-government voices to be heard or read in Kyrgyzstan (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007). One would be two oppositional newspapers, Moya Stolitsa-Novosti (MSN) and Res Publica. These oppositional newspapers, Kulikova and Perlmutter (2007) concluded, were allowed to point out to westerners as examples of press freedom. The other option is the internet. However, Kyrgyz government hired computer hackers to block access to the websites of these newspapers so their content become inaccessible to public (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007).

As Kulikova and Perlmutter (2007) speculated in their study that the blog would seem to be the loneliest form of opposition in a Kyrgyzstan along with other Central Asian countries where free expression is curtailed and news outlets are under official government censorship. Blogging offers as an alternative method and powerful instrument for free speech and self-expression for citizens in Kyrgyzstan, especially younger generations who have experienced two recent revolutions during the last eight years. In her study, Kulikova (2008) noted that young people are actively using the internet to carry out decisions that affect who they are and who they want to become. Ibold (2012) noted in his study that one will have little doubt that new media are embedded in the lives of Kyrgyzstan's youth even though Ibold studied exclusively urban youth.

Internet usage in Kyrgyz Republic

Internet companies have grown exponentially in capital Bishkek city over the years, and now there are local internet chains whose computer equipment is virtually

world class (DeYoung, 2010). Scholars Srinivasan and Fish (2009) noted that internet usage in Kyrgyzstan is about 30 percent of population. The majority of Kyrgyz internet users are in major cities, particularly capital Bishkek cities. Eighty percent of internet users in Kyrgyzstan are under 35 years old (Srinivasan & Fish, 2009). Seventy seven percent of all internet users are located in Bishkek capital city (Warf, 2013). This indicates the younger generation is more connected to the World Wide Web than elder generations. Ibold (2012) said these young internet users are “among the first to come of age in an independent Kyrgyzstan, in a free market economy and with a government that has been radically shaken by nationwide protests twice in their lives” (p.521). Kyrgyz language is not as popular as Russian language among internet users in the country. However, Kyrgyz language websites are growing.

Srinivasan and Fish (2009) pointed out that there is a clear growth among Kyrgyz internet users from personal to political oriented authorship including blogging, being a part of online forums as well as acting citizen journalism tasks. The same authors conclude that the participants in their research included policymakers, scholars and Internet authors that they view their internet authorship practice “as part of a larger project of motivating Kyrgyzstan toward a civil society - a principle of governmentality based on participation and social organization as opposed to the Soviet style totalitarianism governing Kyrgyzstan before independence” (p. 560)

Existing literature supports the view that the internet can facilitate ‘democratization’ (McGlinchey & Johnson 2007; Kulikova & Perlmutter 2007; Srinivasan & Fish 2009), particularly in repressive countries where the leaders do

everything to silence the opposing ideas to keep them from spreading to society. Nothing has demonstrated the power of the internet use of citizens more than recent revolutions in Arabic countries where the leaders of those nations tried to control the flow of information by shutting down the internet and other sources of information, but citizens were tweeting, uploading videos from demonstrations of brutal violence taken with their own cameras, and with their phones through neighboring countries' channels of internet at the bordering signal areas. People were telling their stories in real time.

The Internet played an instrumental role in the organization of protests in Kyrgyzstan that led to the ousting of President Askar Akayev (McGlinchey & Johnson, 2007). Internet also is credited for winner of presidential election in South Korea in 2002. This is when Roh Moo Hyun won the election because of actively use of internet platforms to reach voters (Wall, 2012). South Korea's OhMyNews, a collaborative news site began two years earlier than the presidential election of South Korea, allowed citizens to post news. Cai Wilkinson and Yelena Jetpyspayeva undertook one of the first studies examining the blogging in Kyrgyzstan in 2012. They concluded that blogging remained limited to 'a few hundred' people until the late 2000s, however, Bishkek-based NGO Kloop Media Foundation reports that there are 12,000 blogs. Some are more active than others. The Hivos –Dutch based organization funded a local blog platform with servers in-country. Wilkinson and Jetpyspayeva (2012) stated that Kyrgyz internet users generally are passive consumers. They cite a study done by Driesbach in 2009, who concluded that online engagement in Kyrgyzstan is focused primarily on consumption rather than production, with interviewees estimating they spend approximately 80% of

their online time reading and only 20% posting. Kyrgyzstan plans to provide full internet access in all populated areas by 2017 (IREX, 2014).

The Kyrgyz blogosphere is not well-developed as elsewhere in Asia, Europe or North America. There are several popular blog-hosting platforms in Kyrgyzstan such as Namba.kg, Kloop.kg, Diesel.elcat.kg, and Taboo.kg (Freedom on the Net, 2012). Most blogs are in Russian language. In general, Barlow (2008) says that there are two types of blogs; one is individual, and the other is commercial. Commercial blogs operate on premises different from those of the individual. If the blogs are changing our culture and/or our society, then it is because of the individual bloggers (Barlow, 2008). Russell (2009) described that blogs can be “a vehicle of democratic expression” (p. 8) and blogs can be “more things than we are presently imagining” (p. 8) including a means to revive traditions, to explore identity, to conduct public relations and so on. Therefore, this study specifically examines the individual blogs among student population by looking at the Kyrgyz contexts attempting to develop more meaningful assessment of how blogospheres variously serve communication needs, how they exist in relation to one another (Russell & Echnaibi, 2009).

Barlow thinks that the blogs are symptoms of change because they can form groups and connect and thus become powerful, both politically and economically collectively (Barlow, 2008). Traditional media have some limitations such as space. In contrast, bloggers do not face these constraints and thereby can shape the public agenda.

Blogs are a decentralized medium, unlike the mainstream media and traditional political organizations which are highly centralized. This has two effects. First, blogging

has altered the idea of who is influential. Second, blogging simultaneously provides opportunities from non-credentialed individuals who might otherwise lack a public forum to offer commentary or analysis (Pole, 2010).

From an institutional perspective bloggers often monitor mainstream media and other political organizations. Previously, there were fewer organizations monitoring the mainstream media and other organizations. In an era of media consolidation, owned by corporate elites who are largely impervious to public sentiment, bloggers have penetrated the hierarchy of the media, thereby diluting the strength of these omniscient organizations. Blogging unites bloggers and their readers by forming loose network. For Pole, a network was associations or affiliations of individual bloggers with similar interests. Bloggers have been able to cover sensitive topics, at times, offering a unique perspective based on their group identity (Pole, 2010).

Mixed Assessments on Implications of Blogging

To date there has been little agreement among scholars on whether blogs have the potential to heighten toward democratization in society. Some scholars are skeptical about the democratic implications of blogging because blogs hinder democratic debate. These scholars argue that blogs attract a homogenous audience whose purpose is to push their own point of view (Dahlgren, 2005; Kaye et al., 2012; Sunstein, 2007; Xenos, 2008). Others argue that the flow of information is democratized through blogging. The other group of scholars conclude the impact of blogging is relatively moderate (Pole, 2010) while another group of thinkers assert that it might be too early to assess the impact of blogging regarding the engagement civically and politically. Therefore, some scholars

argue there is a need for more empirical studies to obtain holistic picture whether blogs can hinder or facilitate the democratic processes. However, everyone seems to agree that internet access is a necessary criterion for engagement, but it maybe not sufficient (Brundidge & Rice, 2009).

Blogs Promote Democracy. In 2011 Arab Spring, blogging is credited with changing the repressive regimes in certain countries including Egypt and/or Tunisia. The rulers of some other countries were forced from power. Such major uprisings in foreign countries, including Jordan and Algeria, occurred and elsewhere Africa and Ukraine experienced the largest revolution with hundreds of thousands when people took to the streets demanding the country's president to resign. All of them challenged their long-ruling and oftentimes authoritarian leaders (International Crisis Group, 2011). Some of these countries were among the world's top "enemies of the internet" identified in 2013 by Reporters Without Borders. What is striking about these waves of uprisings and mass protests is that internet. YouTube, Twitter, Facebook – along with online bloggers, all played an important role in communicating, coordinating and channeling this rising tide of opposition and variously managed to bypass state controlled national media as they propelled images and ideas of resistance and mass defiance (Cottle, 2011). The following examples demonstrate that blogs can serve powerful tools.

Power of Blogs in Foreign Countries. One of the best examples of blogging in promoting democracy would be political movement labeled as *Kefaya* in Egypt. The movement emerged as a result of activists and youth blogging calling for civil disobedience and sought to break taboos and establish a right to demonstrate and speak

frankly about the government (Downing, 2011). During a 2005 demonstrations against proposed constitution and in support of judicial independence, Egyptian women were sexually assaulted by state security forces. The mainstream remained silent for three days, bloggers were the only ones to cover the alarming incidents, posting videos, images and eye-witness accounts. After three days, Egyptian mainstream media began to cover the incidents. Others were inspired to publicize and protest by posting documentations on blogs.

A bit old but infamous example from the United States would be that political bloggers in the United States were credited with unseating Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott in 2002 and assembling 20,000 demonstrators to march on behalf of the Jena Six in 2007 (Pole, 2010). Pole (2010) also noted that checking the major media outlets, political bloggers unearthed falsified documents produced by CBS in 2004 and revealed enhanced news photos depicting “plumes of smoke” from the Iraq war in 2006. Echchaibi (2009) cites BBC news organization that reported about the case in which bloggers in Egypt have been jailed for writing about the political grooming of [former] President Mubarak’s son to take over the leadership of the country or about the police indifference to mounting sexual harassment of young girls in the streets of Cairo (Echchaibi & Russell, 2009). These bloggers employ many journalistic principles-credibility, accuracy, witness, investigation, reporting, timeliness, and used similar mechanisms to establish authority, such as eyewitness accounts, sourcing, quoting, images, video and reputation (Downing, 2011). Existing literature suggests that research from the United States and the United Kingdom and some other European countries over the past fifteen years shows an

increasingly positive relationship between internet use and levels of civic and political engagement (Jensen et al, 2012).

Boulianne (2009) argued that the impact of the internet for engagement (civically and politically) was positive, and more recent studies have argued that it is even greater (Borge & Cardenal, 2011; DeZuniga, Copeland, & Bimber, 2011). Barlow (2008) argues that no blogs exist alone – that is, each is part of a greater conversation that includes comments, links, and other blogs (among other things). Blogger adds to conversation already in progress (Barlow, 2008). Individual blogs may indeed reach small audiences, and each sometimes might be proudly minor in the stories it covers, but these blogs “mass,” are becoming something more. It is not surprising that the blogs are often criticized for not providing much that original, acting almost exclusively as amplifiers for things created elsewhere. No matter how much they would like to, the press can not find every story on their own—they have to let many come to them, so to speak (Barlow, 2008). Ostertag et al (2014) argue that some blog readers may start their own blogs in an effort to add their voice and perspective (p. 22). Typically, the complaints of many newcomers to the blogs begin to have a common sound to them: the blogs are sloppy, filled with anger, and are a little more than commentary on what others have written. Those voicing such criticism generally are not looking at the blogs as conversation, as process-but as object (Barlow, 2008). All other outlets are controlled in some way. For example, one has to be hired to write a column in a newspaper, or make a speech at a conference, even letters to the editors are heavily selected and edited. Callers to the radio stations do not often get through, or get the time to say what they want, and bump

stickers cannot really carry much text. However, anyone with internet can access to blogs (Myers, 2011).

Supporters of the blog argue that passing the baton of news production to citizens, or at least sharing it with them, has opened an unprecedented space for otherwise unsolicited voices to participate in public discussions. Discussions of blogs have also been limited to established and recognizable blogs, known as A list blogs, and this has ignored the important work of less known bloggers who might better inform our conceptualizations of the role of blogging in an increasingly networked era. Usual pundits already present in the mainstream media for news and comments. Less-known blogs not only incarnate better the potential of internet users to challenge elite control of news production, but they also show us a smaller scale how individuals and communities use network technologies to sustain new forms of social, cultural and economic solidarity. Blogging is perhaps the most paradigmatic of a digital revolution that has upset previous forms of traditional publishing. Some have compared the influence of blogs on widening the public discourse to the impact of the printing press on encouraging dissent during the Reformation (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006; Russell & Echnaibi, 2009).

Nyre and O'Neill (2012) argue that three types of motivation for anyone to participate in the media including blogging. The scholars identified political change among those three private enjoyment and social attractions being the other two motivations. Participation in the news process whether through interactive old media or new media may never erode existing power relations between publisher and consumer, but as Manuel Castells (2007) says, the belief that you have power constitute real power.

Castella believes the new media is social space where power relations are challenged and that interactive technology like blogging are making it easier for ordinary people to organize themselves as a decisive communication bloc. “Blogging puts publishing and broadcasting into the hands of any individual who is determined to let the world hear his or her voice. People blog for different reasons, from complex to simple” (Dumova & Fiordo, 2012, p. vii). The blogosphere rivals any mass media in terms of reach, time spent, and wider cultural, social, and political impact.

Blogs Hinder Democracy. “Most bloggers must realize that while their news post is equal to a BBC online news story in theory since both are web pages and are given equal treatment by the internet infrastructure and web browsers, in practice few people will look for their post and it is very unlikely that many will find it by accident” (Thelwall, 2013, p. 71). Hence the mass of bloggers go virtually unnoticed, while a few news websites dominate the online news audience (p. 72).

Even if searched for and read, some scholars argue that blogs are the online venues that people go to support their own opinion and deliberately avoid information that challenges their beliefs. This is selective exposure and it occurs when people expose themselves to the media messages that are most familiar to them, and they retain the messages that confirm the values and attitudes they already hold (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2014, p. 459). Johnson, Bichard, & Zhang (2009) argue that internet may promote selective exposure because it provides such an abundance of information that selective exposure is not only possible but also necessary (p. 63). Johnson et al (2009) argue that selective exposure would be stronger for blogs than for the internet in general and it is

something that has received limited attention from scholars. This will increase similar minded people (Stroud, 2006, 2007, 2008). Schudson (1995) said that such selective exposure may endanger democracy while Mutz (2002) concluded that it may lead to less tolerance of opposing viewpoints and produce less informed electorate (Johnson et al., 2009). Others even called blogging as “slacktism or click activism” a kind of liberal catharsis during lunch break that gives participants the impression they have done something about issues when, in fact, their online action had no offline effect at all (Joyce, 2010, p. 26). Andrew Keen (2008) argues that the internet is full of fake identities such as fake Facebook accounts, or fake email addresses. This is what Keen calls “sock puppet” and therefore seems to support the idea that internet is detrimental to democracy. He also argued that independent bloggers may claim to be independent, but may actually be in the pay of a sponsor and refers to such bloggers as floggers.

In their study, Johnson et al (2009) examined the blog readers use highly selective exposure especially when accessing to political information. The authors concluded that one in five internet users seek out the blogs that challenged their views while the majority of respondents noted of seeking blogs for political information that would support points of views. In another study, Kaye (2011) concluded that blogs attract a more homogeneous, but more engaged, niche audience.

Civic and Political Engagement

Peter Levine, the philosopher and civic education scholar, argues that broader civic participation is important and beneficial to society for several reasons including that engaged citizens compliment the work of a successful state by creating and maintaining a

strong civil society. Broad political equality is more likely where there is broad civic participation, and much less likely where only narrow segments of the population participate. The political system listens closely to those who speak up and limitedly to those who do not. Broad civic participation also results generally in better functioning public institutions because the institutions benefit from the collective energy of the people. Additionally, everyone has needs that can only be addressed collectively, and so these needs are more likely to be known and addressable when participation levels are high (Kidd, 2011, p. 151). Existing literature suggests that research from the United States and the United Kingdom over the past fifteen years shows an increasingly positive relationship between internet use and levels of civic and political engagement (Jensen et al, 2012, p. 1).

Offline versus Online Engagement. Online information gathering and online participation does influence offline participation and may increase interest in politics, even for those who are uninterested in politics. Online participation and information gathering can also increase the likelihood of voting (Hamilton & Tolbert, 2012, p. 75). The author suggest that the mobilization of younger voters has permanent rather than ephemeral effects, as it initiates them into a habitual pattern of higher turnout that can endure in later elections (Hamilton & Tolbert cites Plutzer, 2002). The young are clearly more likely to use political information online. Some scholars suggest that men are more likely than woman to seek political information from blogs (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005; Salwen et al., 2005). Male bloggers tend to be young with some leisure time for blogging activities (Eveland & Dylko, 2007; Graf, 2006; Johnson et al., 2007; Perlmutter, 2008;

Rainie, 2005). Most read blog authors are largely male, highly educated, and politically active. However, recent studies suggest that it may be changing. These authors are also most likely to be able to have input into the broader political public spheres, shaping both the online and offline news agenda (Lilleker et al., 2014).

Evidence also suggests associations between digital media use and a range of other participation related outcomes. These include discussion and political talk, civic engagement, knowledge, internet, donations, attendance at political events, participation in calls for action by interest groups, and communication with government. (Bimber, 1999, 2003; Bimber, Stohl, & Flanagin, 2009; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003; Mossberger et al., 2008; Pasek, More, & Romer, 2009; Xenos & Moy, 2007). However, outcomes vary across type of participation. Anduiza et al (2012) argue that digital media may not have the same level of impact, if any, on civic and political involvement in non-Anglo-Saxon environments given the fact that research studies offered mixed conclusions in the Islamic world regarding the consequences of digital media use for democracy. To date, there has been little agreement whether online engagement is simply a new mode of engagement used by those already active in politics and civically or whether digital media can also attract new participants (Anduiza et al., 2012, p .7)

Different people's use of the digital media has a single set of outcomes regardless of context, as that would be nonsensical. It has been amply demonstrated that media effects are contingent on many factors, such as citizen resources and motivations, socioeconomic development, the character of civil society, and many other factors. (Norris, 2002, p. 21)

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of how much internet users in Kyrgyzstan engage politically and civically through blogging can be analyzed through uses and gratification theory. This theory has been widely applied in mass communication research to audience. To date, there has been little agreement on who gets the most credit for developing uses and gratification theory. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine who should get the credit for uses and gratification. However, Wimmer and Dominick (1994) proposed that uses and gratification theory began in the 1940s when researchers examined why audiences engaged in various forms of media behavior, such as listening to the radio broadcast or reading the news (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 4). Some scholars credit this theory to Schramm's immediate reward and delayed reward model of media gratifications. Some others give credit to Elihu Katz in 1970s.

Katz, Blumber, and Gurevitch (1974) typically get the credit for uses and gratification theory. They stated that the uses and gratification is derived from (1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (7) other consequences, perhaps, mostly unintended ones. (p. 20). Thus, media users are indeed active participants rather than previously thought passive users because they make conscious decisions in media use, what types of, when and under what circumstances unless no alternatives for audience members.

Uses and gratification is most useful for this study because on assumption of U&G theory, internet users use blogging and mass media in general because they have different needs. Blogs are used for different reasons such as to share opinions, to share information, to share feelings with friends and fellows along with so many other reasons of why someone may blog (Haigh & Pfau, 2007; Hebert, 2004; Reynolds, 2004). This study proposes that internet users in Kyrgyzstan use blogging to satisfy the need to engage politically and civically. Engagement civically and politically has been deprived from people's lives because of authoritarian style of government.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on uses and gratification theory application to blogs and other social media. Fullwood, Nicholls, and Makichi (2014) attempted to examine whether sex, age and personality would be associated with individual blogging differences. The authors concluded that personal revelation, emotional, selective disclosure and social networking needs and advertising are the major needs one may seek through blogging. It is important to note that this particular study included overrepresentation of women, 108 female bloggers out of 160 total participants. Fullwood et al. (2013) have reported about gender differences in blog because of different needs and wants. Specifically, Fullwood et al. (2013) argue that men tend to blog about events, whereas women tend to blog about their own lives and experience. Other studies also suggested gender played a role in differences. For example, women are said to be motivated by self-expression whereas men create blogs to share information (Li, 2007; Lu & Hsiao, 2009). Furthermore, Chen (2012) investigated what drove women to blog and how those needs were met through blogging. She concluded that self-

disclosure and need for affiliation play some role. However, Chen acknowledged that these needs may not tell the full story why women blog.

In a more international setting, Bronstein (2012) was mainly concerned with Spanish-speaking international bloggers across six countries in Latin American continent. Bloggers represented Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Ecuador. Ultimately, the author argued that motivations for these Spanish speaking bloggers included self-documentation, improving writing skills, self-expression, information sharing, passing time, and socialization. In another somewhat related study, Sepp, Liljander, and Gummerus (2011) examined bloggers from Estonia, another Soviet Union country. The authors of the study revealed that enlightening others, advertising, and promotion, and the social gratifications of communication, image management, and vanity, are among the gratifications internet users in Estonia sought through blogging.

Limitations of Uses and Gratifications. Although the uses and gratification theory offers some insights into how people actively select and use the mass media products to gratify certain needs and wants, this theory has been criticized for some weak elements. First, some mass communication scholars contended that uses and gratification is not a rigorous social science theory (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 3). Others noted that widely criticized weak elements include the theory focused on individual approach, its reliance heavily on self-reports and/or the theory was unsophisticated about the origins of the needs that the audience brings to the media. However, Ruggiero argues that these weaknesses of the uses and gratification theory have been addressed by researchers over the following decades of its development in 1940s (Ruggiero, 2000).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Design

This study applied mixed method using survey (quantitative) and in-depth interviews (qualitative) approaches to obtain a holistic picture of student bloggers' engagement civically and politically. More corroborated conclusions were expected when results were derived from two different types of data.

The specific steps of undertaking this study involved conducting a pilot study among a small group of student bloggers identical to the target group at the American University of Central Asia located in capital Bishkek city of Kyrgyz Republic. The second step for the author was to identify and contact main research agents “on the ground” from Kyrgyz universities about reaching out to the student bloggers. Research recruitment announcements were sent via email to the International Ala-Too University, Bishkek Humanitarian University, Kyrgyz State National University, American University of Central Asia, International Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, University of Central Asia, Kyrgyz State University named after Arbaev and Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University. The convenient and snowball approaches were applied to obtain survey participants. Third step included administering the web-based survey and collecting all data.

The decision to conduct web based survey was based on the benefits of internet surveys over the traditional methods. While everyone would agree that web-based surveys have some weaknesses including its limitations to internet users, but online

surveys offer the advantages of reaching larger number of potential participants and a low cost. After all, this study targets those internet users who have access to both email and the web.

The author collected online survey responses during the period of January 19, 2015 and March 6, 2015 via Qualtrics surveys. The survey was offered in English (see Appendix A), Russian (see Appendix B) and in Kyrgyz (see Appendix C) languages. Permission was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Southern Mississippi before undertaking the study (see Appendix D) along with for survey instruments (see Appendices E and F). Student bloggers chose the language in which they wanted to take the survey in. Of the 221 of respondents' access to the online questionnaire via snowball approach 132 completed the survey resulting in a 59 percent response rate. The author then scheduled and conducted in-depth interviews with 10 student bloggers. The in-depth interviews were scheduled after analysis of survey data. The in-depth interview participants were selected by several criteria in the following order. Criteria included balancing the following (1) gender (2) primary language of blogging (3) platform of blogging (4) the length of blogging experience in terms (beginner versus experienced) and finally (5) availability of those who agreed for interview. Existing literature suggests that 10 participants for in-depth interviews might be suitable for correlation research/exploratory studies.

The researcher asked semi-structured questions out of common themes emerging from the survey data to obtain a holistic picture of the student bloggers engagement civically and politically. The survey provided an overall picture but an in-depth method

provided better search for questions like, “why” or “how” they engage or why they do not. Personal identifying questions were not asked during the interviews. Some interview data excluded from analysis such as irrelevant to research purpose from the interviewer’s point of view.

Locations were mutually agreed between the researcher and the study participant that included hosting institution and neutral venue such as cafes or restaurants. The interviews were conducted primarily in Russian language. A series of basic questions were asked to all participants with subsequent discussions to obtain richer information.

For example:

1. Why do you blog?
2. Have you ever felt the need to blog?
3. Who do you blog for? Do you have an idea of who your readers are?
4. How worthwhile do you think your blogging is?
5. Have you gotten into trouble -legally or personally- because of materials posted on your blog?

Participants

The sample of bloggers was drawn from student population registered at universities of Kyrgyz Republic in spring semester of 2015. Potential subjects must have had a functioning blog in any language and be registered at a university. Several reasons existed for targeting student bloggers. First, current college students in Kyrgyzstan are among the first generation after the collapse of Soviet Union who grew up with access to internet and other communication technologies (Ibold, 2010). Second, once young are

engaged politically and civically, they continue to be active throughout their lives (Plutzer, 2002, Dalton, 2008) and finally, Kirmso (2010) concluded that young citizens of Kyrgyzstan tend to be eager to challenge existing norms and expectation. No one under 18 was invited to participate in this study. Participation was voluntary and respondents were offered the option to stop at any time or complete the survey partially. Once a respondent completed the survey, he/she no longer had access to the survey to avoid coverage error.

Instrumentation

This study measured bloggers civic and political engagement as well as the motivations for blogging. Questionnaire statements to measure civic engagement were adopted from the research undertaken by Leung (2009). Leung measured civic engagement combining from four sources such as (1) media attentiveness, (2) internal political efficacy, (3) external political efficacy and (4) interest in public affairs.

Media attentiveness included statements such as how often respondents use newspapers, magazines, radio and TV news in a typical week. *Internal political efficacy* included “voting is the only way that people like me can have any about how the government runs things” and “sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.” Higher scores indicate greater internal political efficacy. Reliability alpha was 0.52 in the initial study. Although the alpha was low but the Leung (2009) combined these two statements from internal political efficacy in keeping with conventional practice in the literature. Respondents

indicated the level of agreement or disagreement where 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

External Political efficacy included statements such as “I do not think public officials care much about what people like me think” or “People like me do not have any say about what the government does.” Higher score indicate greater external political efficacy.

Interest in public affairs was measured by statements like “some people seem to think about what is going on in government most of the time, whether there is an election going on or not” or “I would say I follow what is going on in government.” Respondents indicated the level of agreement or disagreement where 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. Reliability alpha was 0.85 in the initial study. The correlational analysis was run for civic engagement. These four sources constitute civic engagement

For civic engagement online, statements like “I frequently share opinion about public/social issues on my blog” and “I post news stories about public/social issues.” These statements were measured with the level of agreement or disagreement where 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. For political engagement online, questionnaire statements adopted from an initial study undertaken by Feezell et al. (2012) was used. The initial statements were revised to meet this research purposes from Facebook usage into blogging. The statements included such as “I frequently share opinion on political topics on my blog” “I comment political opinion or post news story links about political affairs” or “I expressed opinion about a

government officials at any level of government via blogging.” Respondents indicated the level of agreement where 1 = very unlikely; 2 = unlikely; 3 = undecided; 4 = likely; 5 = very likely. In order to examine how political and civic engagement are related or not, correlation analysis was run.

For political engagement offline, statements were adopted from existing literature to measure the participants’ engagement (or lack of it) in offline. Examples of such statements are “I attend political meetings” or “I wear T-shirts with a political message” or “I participated in illegal or legal demonstrations/strikes.” Respondents indicated the level of agreement where 1 = very unlikely; 2 = unlikely; 3 = undecided; 4 = likely; 5 = very likely.

Because of revision from the initial use of the statement questionnaires, the author ran a pilot study with 10 among target participants to find ambiguous statements and/or remove repetitive ones in Bishkek among acquaintances of the author who meet the eligibility for this research (such as college student, have a functioning blog).

As mentioned above, the online questionnaires were offered in Russian, English and Kyrgyz languages. Russian is the official language and Kyrgyz is the state language of the country. English is also offered to those who speak it fluently (perhaps, universities where English is the main language of instruction). The instruments are originally in English language. The research had native English speaker with fluent Russian language skills required to translate the instrument from English into Russian. The researcher had the native Russian language speaker with English fluency level translate the Russian version into English. The author compared the translation with the initial instrument to

see the survey asked what it says it was asking. The study has civic and political engagement variables.

Procedures

The informed consent form was included in the invitation e-mails as well as in the beginning of the online survey. The potential participants were asked to read the informed consent form and were required to choose either “yes” to proceed or “no” to quit the survey. The participants were also asked to assert that they were 18 years old or older. For this study purposes, student bloggers from other countries attending universities Kyrgyzstan were ineligible. The specific steps include (1) recruiting (2) sending out an invitation emails (3) informed consent (4) screen questions (age and blogging experience) (5) answering questions (6) basic demographic questions.

The author sent an introductory message to potential participants describing the purpose of the study and why respondent’s opinion was being sought and state that the survey was anonymous. The second message was sent after a week to all potential participants through teaching and university email listservs as well as via personal contacts. Then once each week a message was sent for a total of four messages to potential participants.

The data collected on Qualtrics survey was downloaded into a statistical analysis program, SPSS. Once downloaded, the data on the website was deleted from the server as well as from the researcher’s password-protected computer. The informed consent form emphasized that the survey was voluntary, and thus participants could stop the survey at any time. The questionnaires did not have any identifying information on them. The

interviews were analyzed qualitative to find common themes out of the bloggers experiences. There was no financial compensation offered as a result of their participation. However, the participants were offered reimbursement for their travel expenses to the interview location to all interview participants. This typically included from 50 Kyrgyz soms (roughly \$1) to 150 Kyrgyz soms (roughly \$3). Also, participants were offered to have summary of the research once the data collection and analysis were completed. Any survey participant was encouraged to contact the researcher for the summary if he/she so wished. Participants were required to answer each question for comprehensive analysis. They were not allowed to skip questions, but they had the option to quit at any time. Questionnaire completion was expected to take about 15 minutes of participants' time. Incomplete data were discarded.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

A total of 221 student bloggers submitted questionnaires online. Those respondents who had begun but not completed the survey or those who were ineligible because of age or lack of blogging account were removed from final analysis reducing the *N* to a total of 132 completed surveys. Approximately 71% of the respondents were female ($n = 94$) and 29% were male ($n = 38$). Female overrepresentation in this study reflects the universe. Deputy Minister of Education and Science for the Kyrgyz Republic reiterated the female overrepresentation at universities of the country out of approximately 225,000 students (B. Tursunkulova, personal communication, February 25, 2015). As for class rankings, juniors made up the largest group at 30%, followed closely by seniors at 25%, and graduate students at 23%, with freshman students at 16%, and sophomores at 7%.

Almost half (48%) of survey participant bloggers said that they blog in Russian language, 28% of bloggers write in Kyrgyz language, 16% blog in English, and the remaining included Uzbek (3%) and unspecified “other” languages, roughly 4% (Table 1). The majority (37%) of bloggers indicated that they use Facebook Notes as a platform for their blogging activities. Roughly 20% indicated that they use “other blogging platform” (local Diesel, Namba blogging platforms) while slightly more than 15% responded they use blogspot. 17% said they use Kyrgyzstan local blogging Kloop.kg platform. The remaining included Wordpress (7%), LiveJournal (4%), and Tumblr (4%) (Table 2).

Table 1

Language of Blogging

Language	Count	Percentage
<hr/>		
Russian	64	48.5
Kyrgyz	37	28
English	22	16.7
Uzbek	4	3
Other	5	3.8

Table 2

Blogging Platform

Platform	Count	Percentage
Wordpress	10	7.6
Blogger	21	15.6
Kloop	16	12.1
LiveJournal	5	3.8
Facebook Notes	50	37.9
Tumblr	5	3.8
Other	25	18.9

Approximately, 22% of all participants have been blogging for at least three years or more. Thirty three percent have been blogging for about one year to less than three years. Roughly 15% bloggers said that they blog for more than six months and less than a year while 10% indicated that they blog for six months only. Eleven percent of participants said they blog from one month to less than three months. The remaining 10% said they have been blogging for less than a month (Table 3).

Table 3

Length of Blogging

Length of Blogging	Count	Percentage
Less than a month	14	10.6
1 to less than 3 months	15	11.4
3 months to less than 6 months	13	9.8
6 months to less than a year	17	12.9
1 year to less than 3 years	44	33.3
3 years and more	29	22

Civic engagement offline was operationalized using from four sources such as (1) media attentiveness, (2) internal political efficacy, (3) external political efficacy and (4) interest in public affairs. Civic engagement online was operationalized using statements like “I frequently share opinion about public/social issues on my blog” or “I post news stories about public/social issues.”

Political engagement offline was measured by such statements “I attend political meetings” or “I wear T-shirts with a political message” or “I participated in illegal or legal demonstrations/strikes. Political engagement online was measured by statements as “I frequently share opinion of a political nature on my blog” and “I comment political

opinion or post news story links about political affairs” (see Table 4 for the descriptive data of these variables).

Table 4

Descriptive data of the sample

Variables	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Civic engagement offline	3.25	.80
Civic engagement online	2.56	1.02
Political engagement offline	2.32	.86
Political engagement online	2.62	1.17

From the means for each of the four variables, it can be noted that as a group the bloggers showed higher levels of civic engagement online than offline. The same is true for political engagement. The sample also showed higher levels of political engagement than civic engagement.

RQ1 examined whether there was any relationship between online political engagements ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.17$) with offline political engagement ($M = 2.32$, $SD = .87$). The engagement was assessed by Likert scale as 1 being not involved at all to 5 being extremely involved. Bivariate relationship was assessed using Pearson's r

correlation coefficient, and results show a moderate positive correlation between online political engagements with offline political engagement. This finding was significant ($r(131) = .428, p = .001$) indicating that those bloggers who are active online politically tend to be active in offline politically as well.

A paired-samples t test was also calculated to compare the mean of online political engagement score to the mean of offline political engagement. The mean on online political engagement was 2.62 ($SD=1.17$), and the mean of offline political engagement was 2.32 ($SD=.87$). The engagements assessed the level of agreement 1 (strongly disagree)–5 (strongly agree) or 1 (very unlikely) to 5(very likely). A significant difference from online political engagement with offline political engagement was also found ($t(131)=-3.020, p=.003$). The finding of paired-samples t test confirmed the conclusion of the correlation analysis.

RQ2 was meant to test the relationship between being active civically online ($M=2.56, SD = 1.02$) and whether that translates to civic engagement offline ($M=3.25, SD = .80$). The engagement was assessed by Likert scale as 1 being not involved at all to 5 being extremely involved. Bivariate relationship was computed using Pearson's r correlation coefficient, and results show no correlation ($r(131) = .995, p = -.001$) between online civic engagements with offline civic engagement.

RQ3 explored whether gender differences occur in how students blogged. To answer this question, independent samples t -test was computed to examine whether gender played a role in how Kyrgyz students blogged, specifically, how often they blogged. Independent samples t -test was calculated comparing the mean score of

participants who identified themselves as men to the mean score of participants who identified themselves as women. No significant difference was found ($t(130) = -1.137, p = .171$). The mean score of the men was slightly higher ($M = 2.84, SD = 1.46$) than the mean of the women ($M = 2.45, SD = 1.44$). However, results from independent t-test examining whether gender played a role in engagement politically shows a statistically significant difference. The mean scores of women participants and men participants found a significant difference between two groups ($t(130) = -2.41, p = .017$). The mean score of the women ($M = 2.13, SD = .75$) was significantly lower than the mean score of the men ($M = 2.50, SD = .83$) suggesting that men bloggers were more active politically than women bloggers. All other gender analysis revealed no significant differences. The engagement was assessed by Likert scale as 1 being not involved at all to 5 being extremely involved.

H1 examined whether the length of time one had blogged correlated to civic engagement. That is the longer period of time (weeks, months, years) one has blogged, the more engaged he/she will be civically. Bivariate relationship was computed using Pearson's r correlation coefficient, and results show a weak negative correlation, however, it was not significant ($r(131) = -.03, p = .729$). The length of blogging ($M = 4.12, SD = 1.65$) was not correlated to civic engagement ($M = 3.88, SD = .63$) indicating that one engaged civically did not depend on how long one had blogged.

H2 tested whether the length of blogging was correlated to political engagement. That is the longer period of time (weeks, months, years) one had blogged, the more engaged he/she was politically. First, bivariate relationship was assessed using Pearson's r

correlation coefficient, and results show a positive but moderate significant correlation ($r(131) = .180, p = .03$). The length of blogging ($M = 4.12, SD = 1.65$) was positively correlated to political engagement ($M = 2.24, SD = .79$) indicating that the more time period one blogs, the more he/she becomes engaged politically.

H3 investigated whether there was a positive relationship between being engaged civically ($M = 3.88, SD = .63$) and being engaged politically ($M = 2.24, SD = .79$). Bivariate relationship was assessed using Pearson's r correlation coefficient, and results show a positive but moderate relationship ($r(131) = .249, p = .004$). Therefore, H3 is supported.

RQ4 was analyzed qualitatively. This question asked what uses and gratifications Kyrgyz student bloggers indicate was the main reason he/she blogs. First, the author read all 53 responses and reviewed qualitative responses from the participants. After reading and reviewing the respondents' comments, the author sorted the uses and gratifications comments into groups. The following uses and gratifications themes emerged:

- (1) *Sharing Information*: Roughly 40 percent (21 students) bloggers commented that they use blogging platform to share including sharing information, sharing ideas, sharing opinions, sharing pictures, sharing news about daily life, sharing interesting information about Kyrgyzstan, etc.

One male student identified as Erlan said:

I wish to share my thoughts. If I keep my thoughts inside of me, people would become crazy. You have to share what is inside. I know people who shut down because they do not want to talk to people. I had one incident at least when my gf

[sic] got married to another guy. I shut up for about a week or two. Then my friends came and suggested that “talk to us” and they supported me. Share with us. Where have you been? Please share what is inside. After this, then I realized that you have to share and it helps you. It makes you feel better (personal communication, March 22, 2015).

Another student identified as Stalbek:

It is easier to express your opinion and reach many people through social media. Otherwise, it would be difficult to reach many people in real life. Meeting people one by one requires much time. I need to express my ideas and opinions because they [other people] change my opinion or I can change their opinions. I benefit from knowing other’s thoughts (personal communication, March 22, 2015).

Another student identified as Dasha who said:

I decide to write about awards that I get. I do not write about everyday life routines. This would be boring. It is not catchy. For example, I applied for one [study abroad] program and I got accepted. That was really exciting. Travel for free. I shared about it to other readers, who want to try the same thing (personal communication, April 1, 2015).

(2) *Self-Expression*: Approximately 20 percent (11 students) bloggers mentioned using blogging for self-expression. Respondents mentioned that blogging is the platform for “expressing myself,” “express my ideas about anything,” “expressing my opinion and seek public reactions,” “express my position,” etc.

Female student identified as Zhypar noted:

Blogging is online diary.... I can write freely without being afraid, like, censorship, something like. I can write pretty anything, for example, about... like trees, my predictions for tomorrow, my beliefs, something like that (personal communication, April 3, 2015).

Another student identified as Aizat said:

Social media is spreading quickly. Internet is the platform to share your thoughts and ideas. I do not have particular goals by running a blog. Those who comment to my posts, I will discuss with them further with them (personal communication, April 3, 2015).

Zhibek said:

I wanna share news with friends, they can share their opinion about my posts whether they agree or disagree. Human is a social creature. You have to tell out loud certain things. You can not keep information inside of you. You share your emotions. You get rid of those emotions, either negative or positive (personal communication, March 19, 2015).

(3) *Raise-Awareness*: Almost 11 percent (six respondents) mentioned that they blog to raise awareness about social issues, about women issues, including as one participant noted “I blog to contribute to Kyrgyzstan’s development by discussing social issues.”

Senior female student said:

I am satisfied by the fact that my posts are read especially when I receive “likes” on my facebook posts...I am indifferent to blogging because I think those who blog are those who are concerned about society, social issues. Sometimes blogs write certain topics/issues that official or traditional mass media outlets do not cover. This is what I like about blogging. This is what makes blogging strong (personal communication, April 2, 2015).

Another student said:

Blogging is developing in Kyrgyzstan. Most of the bloggers seem to write about social problems. We even have a blog called “Activist Girls” who are 13 or 14 years old. These young girls collect stories from their peer fellows around the country via email. They collect stories in Kyrgyz or Russian languages and they post on their collective blog. It is very good that there is an instrument where they can express their thoughts, discontent via blogging. Even if there is only a few people reading the blog posts, at least public becomes aware about issues (personal communication, March 27, 20115).

(4) *Passing Time*: Another 11 percent (six bloggers) mentioned that they blog because it was interesting, or to be active, just interested in blogging, or simply said “just use blog.”

(5) *Others*: 17 percent (nine participants) of respondents noted different reasons of their blogging activities ranging from self-documentation (three bloggers), to become a famous (One blogger), to communicate with people (one blogger), practice writing (two participants), one blogged for love and about

love, the final participant noted of blogging to process and simplify complicated news for others to easy understand.

Three Types of Bloggers among Participants

Analysis of in-depth interview with 10 Kyrgyz student bloggers also revealed that there were three types of student bloggers among the participants. One group “civically/politically engaged” includes those who are actively engaging civically and politically online. The other group “civically/politically disengaged” includes those who consciously stay away from engaging civically and politically because their posts will have little to no impact and more importantly, they feel their posts have already led or will lead to negative repercussions. The final group of “personal bloggers” includes those who are uninterested in engaging civically and politically. They simply blog.

Within the Civically/Politically active blogger group, respondents indicated that they were driven or felt the need to post engaging comments. For example, a senior student Zhumagul said:

If I read an article on something very important, I have to post it on my blog. I comment saying that this should not be that way or should be that. There are many things that should be corrected in Kyrgyzstan such as education, medical system, these kinds of things. If something is disturbing, I need to comment, share my feelings. For example, I read news about international marriages in Kyrgyzstan. I read people's comments. I was so angry. I decided to comment. Some people agreed or disagreed. Maybe some read my comments. If they like my idea/comment, they start thinking like me. I want to contribute somehow.

Kyrgyz people do not care about anything. I would like to do good things
(personal communication, April 8, 2015).

Eldiyar, graduate student:

I inform people about political events in Kyrgyzstan and around the world. One of the latest posts was about how Kyrgyz government was considering legal act about LGBT (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender). I argued through my blog post that it is discrimination... Also, I am concerned about state budget misuse. When you see the website of certain ministries and their business trip expenses are too high, I get outraged. I pay taxes not because government spends it for expensive business trips but I pay taxes so government improve social infrastructure. If I express my ideas on a certain topic, people read my posts. They may take into account of what I post such as dissatisfaction or negative reactions or my recommendation (personal communication, April 8, 2015).

Zuhra, senior student:

Government officials are aware about issues that blogs tend to cover. They know about it. They simply do not comment about those issues. The government posts on its website about new laws, new regulations on certain topics, however, they do not put those issues in public discussion. Public discussion of those issues/laws end only with a sentence “public discussion,” in reality, no public discussion is organized. No roundtables are organized to hear public comments about those issues/concerns. They could arrange public hearings about those issues. This is

why they simply mention a public discussion, but in reality, they never do it. This is what we [bloggers] do. We criticize them. We criticize them via our blogging. Blogging is probably developing in those countries where people have something to say [to government]. We have a lot to say to government, and therefore blogging is developing here. We have something to say. We have something to say to lawmakers, such as express our criticism toward government (personal communication, March 25, 2015).

Within the Civically/Politically disengaged blogger group, respondents indicated that they were consciously staying away from engaging civically and politically. This is because they have already been threatened for their blogging posts, and/or they believe their posts will bring negative consequences. For example, one blogger identified as Torogeldi, sophomore student blogger said:

I do not want to write [about politics]. If needed, I need to act seriously not via internet but in real life. I do not want to get involved in it because the consequences might be greater because of my acts. I am afraid of this. If I do something wrong, it will have negatively impact on my parents, on my brothers, on my friends. Therefore, I try to avoid politics in my blogging. I do not deal with parliament, with president. I am a neutral person (personal communication, March 16, 2015).

Another student identified as Stalbek:

Because of my posts, I have had a problem. My post was about politics. I was even threatened by phone for a post on my blog that I wrote. I was threatened by

phone because I wrote about a particular politician, and from their side made a call. I wrote because I knew certain negative things about this politician. This politician looked like he was a good politician. But he was not good and I knew certain negative things about him. I stopped writing about it. I am alone. I do not have a power (personal communication, March 16, 2015).

Another student identified as Zhibek said:

I do not wanna live here. I do not want to get stuck here. I know it sounds egoistic. That is why I am trying to apply for study abroad. Maybe I come back. Maybe I will not.... I am tired of all these happenings in this country. I get irritated. Tired. For example, in villages, there is practice of bride-kidnapping. Only ten percent of those file police report. This shows that people are fine with this. Even if I wanted to help anyhow, there would be no results. People are not educated enough. People are not educated because of lack of finances. There is lack of finances because of corruption. State budget gets misused all the time. There is a spiral of cycle (personal communication, April 2, 2015).

Aizat, senior student blogger said:

I do not feel that I am appreciated here. I am just another university girl. My country does not care about me. I do not trust our government. I do not have a hope. I do not think it is worth writing about social issues and about politics. I had an internship with Kyrgyz State Unemployment Center. I saw many workers there that they had no idea of what they were doing over there. They had uncles, fathers “big guys” who hire them not because of their qualifications but because of

personal connections. It is easy to get a job in the government if you know someone. They do not know the hardship, about common life that average person has (personal communication, April 10, 2015).

Within the personal blogger group, respondents indicated they blog about themselves, about their hobbies. They pay little or no attention to social and/or political issues in the country. For example, Zhypar, junior student said:

I began blogging during the first year of college. It consists of my academic work, academic achievement. This blog is about my undergraduate experience. This is all. Blogging is online diary. It is my diary about everything, what I experience, and broadly undergraduate life. I thought that when I get older, I could go back to that diary, just memorize and read and remember. Something like that (personal communication, March 25, 2015).

Daniyar, senior student

I rarely write. When I write, I write about music, about my favorite music. I seek my readers' comments about my music. If someone does not like my music, then I would know that I should not play that kind of music in presence of that particular person if I know him/her (personal communication, March 25, 2015).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Using theoretical framework of the uses and gratification theory, this research sought to examine bloggers usage of the web space (blog) in Kyrgyzstan to engage civically and politically. The basic assumption of this uses and gratifications theory is that people have needs and wants and seek to gratify those needs and wants via mass media. This research proposed that Kyrgyz students use blogging to gratify their engagement needs and wants. Overall, findings offer two contributions about Kyrgyz bloggers. First, Kyrgyz bloggers use blogging activity primarily for sharing information, self-expression and raise awareness about diverse issues that concern them such as women's issues, social problems, etc. Second, findings indicate that there are three types of bloggers among the participants such as civically/politically engaged, civically/politically disengaged and finally personal bloggers. This final group includes those who are uninterested in engaging civically and politically.

This study does not just replicate earlier research; it extends existing literature by applying it to a different region and cultural context. It is believed to be the first and exploratory study examining student bloggers in the context of Kyrgyz Republic. This is the Central Asian country of which Freedman and Shafer (2012) noted that scholars have "barely scratched the surface" and "there is no shortage of potential topics" in studying Kyrgyz Republic along with other Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union. Snowball and convenient samples from student populations attending higher educational institutions (colleges, institutes, and universities) were used to collect data. Foreign students studying in the country were ineligible.

This current dissertation research offers overall contradictory findings about the role of digital media in Kyrgyzstan in relation to existing literature in how people use web-space in order to engage civically and politically. As described in previous results chapter, there were some moderate but positive relationships between online and offline political engagements among participant bloggers of Kyrgyzstan. This suggests that those bloggers who are active online politically tend to be active in offline politically as well.

This finding contributes to a body of knowledge in two ways. First, it extends the knowledge of those scholars who support the idea that those bloggers who tend to be active online politically tend to be active in offline politically as well regardless of cultural context. Second, the relationship between online and offline engagements has been examined in a region of Central Asia of previously unexamined by scholars. Further support comes from Jorba and Bimber (2012) who argued that digital media use and political engagements has largely been based on research undertaken in the United States and some select Western European countries. Past literature regarding implications of internet use for engagement has been mixed. Therefore, it is difficult to assess whether this dissertation's findings support existing literature. Some studies concluded that the impact of the internet for engagement (civically and politically) was positive and often times is translated into offline participation (Boulianne, 2009; Pole, 2010). This can often be explained by the fact that the internet provides a variety of simplified modes for engagement including by email, blogging platforms, online social networking sites including sharing political messages as well as political recruitment (Jorba, Jensen & Abduiza, 2012). These modes of engagements previously did not exist and thus citizens

could not express their interest through it (Jorba et al., 2012). There are some studies, however, that concluded the reverse finding by highlighting that prior levels of engagement affect internet use (Chadwin, 2012). Specifically, Jorba et al. (2012) conclude that a variety of factors have to be taken into account when evaluating usage of the webspace by users whether they engage politically. These scholars, for example, suggest that level of education, income, and internet skills, and attitudes including interest in politics and political efficacy affect online political engagement (p. 6). In one of the recent studies undertaken by Williams (2015) focusing on students of Kyrgyz Republic suggested that students with higher levels of online activity were significantly and substantially more likely to be protest observers than nonparticipants. This may suggest that students with higher level of online activity tend to be active politically offline. This is why there is a greater need of attention of scholars for further examination of relationship between online and offline engagements politically.

This current dissertation also examined whether being active civically online and that translates into civic engagement offline. This study found that there was no relationship indicating that if one person is active online civically and it does not suggest that the same person may be active civically offline. This finding refutes earlier research. For example, Jorba and Bimber (2012) argue that there is an emerging consensus that positive associations exist between use of internet and engagements of civically. It can also be explained by Kulikova's conclusion that Kyrgyz bloggers have in general negative evaluations of the Kyrgyz government and high level of frustration with the government performance (Kulikova, 2007). She also concluded that internet use among

Kyrgyz youth is associated with the higher levels of intent to leave the country. This might be explained by the fact Kyrgyzstan is relatively poor country with roughly two million young and middle aged men working as Russia migrant workers, out of a total population of nearly six-million in Kyrgyzstan (Zamandash Press, 2015), and thus no wonder why “many villages and town quarters are inhabited nowadays solely by women, children and the elderly” (Ismailbekova, 2014, p. 375). It is also possible that the more bloggers write and expose themselves to sufficient knowledge about how government functions, a term Downs in 1957 called “by-product learning,” they do not engage more civically because they may see little or no impact of their engagement. Overall, residents of Kyrgyzstan seem to have little or no trust in government these days especially given the fact that during the last 10 years Kyrgyzstan has seen its two presidents overthrown due to a popular uprising, numerous riots and reports of ethnic clashes. There is widespread poverty in the country, and Kyrgyzstan is considered to be one of the most unstable countries in the region of South-Central Asia and is vulnerable to internal and external factors to further destabilize the country. Bloggers may think that their voices may not be heard.

Sharing information, self-expression, raise-awareness and killing time are the most frequently cited gratifications Kyrgyz students noted for using blogging. Sharing information and self-expression constituted the majority of uses and gratifications sought by the participants. These uses and gratifications can be understood in line with existing literature that internet has been cited as the only platform for some people of Kyrgyz Republic to express themselves without any repercussions from the government due to

restrictive environment for any anti-government voices (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007). Such restrictive environment is reflected in numerous international reports about the media freedom of Kyrgyzstan. For example, Freedom House rates Kyrgyzstan among the countries of “partly free” because of regular threats and physical attacks on working journalists for their independent reporting while Reporters Without Borders described Kyrgyzstan’s mass media environment as “difficult situation” in its latest 2015 report. This suggests that while some internet users utilize digital media to express themselves or share information with other fellows in a way that did not exist before, this finding, however, does not tell the whole story. Even minority among the participants, some Kyrgyz bloggers focus on entertainment and others simply focus on reprints reports from other news agencies (Freedom House, 2014). This supports the idea of what Tewksbury (2003) has been arguing that digital media users tend to avoid content about public affairs and instead preferred content about sports and/or about entertainment. Further support comes from Prior (2007) who concluded that those internet users with a high orientation toward entertainment in their media use decreases their engagement level both civically and politically. At this moment, the difference between engaging civically and politically calls for a wider scholarly study in this Kyrgyz Republic context for better understanding of those internet users who are active politically online tend to be active in offline. It is also possible that someone could have started blogging last month and be more engaged than someone who has blogged for years.

Gender difference generally did not play a significant role in how students blogged. There seems to be little disagreement on how men and women blog especially

these days. In early years, men seemed to dominate the blogosphere; however, women have reportedly gradually equaled and even surpassed male bloggers (Chen, 2012). Therefore, the difference may have diminished in how they blog even in the context of this Central Asian country. One of this study's noteworthy finding suggests that there were significant differences in how students blogged in engaging politically while everything else did not differ significantly. It is possible that overall Kyrgyz women tend to avoid engaging politically because "there is an ideological support for a domestic role for women" (Heyat, 2010, p.286), and, it is the country where bride kidnapping is a common practice for young men to get married despite it is illegal based on Kyrgyz law. While recognizing that it is a bit old, the percentage of women kidnapped without consent from 43 percent to 75 percent for the 16-25 year-old age group (Kleinbachab, Ablezova, & Aitieva., 2005).

Research Limitations

The author faced several challenges in undertaking this dissertation work. First, numerous potential participants noted that they would be only able to contribute to the research if survey questions did not deal anything of politics. Second, universities requested that the author get permission from the administration before researcher would be allowed to make oral recruitment announcement. This typically involved speaking with several administrators in separate instances. The administrators reviewed the content of survey and at least one university refused to allow the author make recruitment announcement on campus. Third, at least two persons called the author as "spy" and another described the author's work as sponsored work by the government of the United

States, specifically saying “you do not know that it is exactly what the government of the United States orders universities and then your academic advisors assign students to investigate so you report back. The US government will use this information to propagate their information through certain channels.”

A full discussion of whether bloggers in Kyrgyzstan engage civically and politically lies beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, a number of important limitations of this study need to be noted. First, the research had relatively small number of participants. Second, this study is based on student bloggers of capital Bishkek city of Kyrgyzstan. Another major source of error or bias may come from conscious or unconscious cultural bias of the researcher especially the author speaks neither English nor Russian or Kyrgyz as native language. These three languages were utilized for communication with research participants. Fourth, the author implemented a qualitative interview to examine the uses and gratifications participants sought via blogging activity. Clarke and Schober (1992) suggest that processes in interpreting a question and formulating an answer in qualitative research are complex. For example, if the researcher re-words questions, responses from participants tend to change. If the interviewer provides even slightly amended response options, then people give different answers (as cited in Roberts, 2013, p. 76). And a final limitation of this study is the sample was drawn from convenient sampling. It is possible that sampling included under-representation or over-representation of particular groups within the sample, for example, Russian-language blog authors. This undermines the author’s ability to make generalizations from the sample to the population. Finally, the research relied on survey

for data collection and it is possible that respondents may under-estimate and/or overestimate their engagements civically and politically. In other words, participants may lie. Also the author did not examine content of participants' blogs. The research simply asked whether they engaged civically and politically.

Future Research

Future research should focus on a sample of more than student bloggers perhaps including non-student bloggers into the sample along with a larger sample size, which may yield meaning information for the relationship between blogging activities and engagement both civically and politically. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between online and offline civic engagements to see if it becomes significant in future studies. Furthermore, researchers should attempt to include bloggers from regions of the country. Do bloggers from capital Bishkek city differ from those bloggers of regions of Kyrgyz Republic in engagements and in uses and gratifications sought and obtained? Further research is also needed to conduct content analysis of bloggers' posts and compare what they say about their levels of engagement. In addition, it would be fruitful to explore in greater detail what other variables such as income, education level, and personality and demographics may help explain types of engagements along with income level. Additionally, a greater depth of information may have been obtained by examining time spent blogging and levels of civic and political engagements.

Conclusion

This is believed to be the first research examining bloggers and offers some knowledge about internet users of Kyrgyz Republic. There were two primary reasons this

study was necessary. First, the internet has become increasingly an object of interest difficult to ignore for academics and practitioners in mass communication and other social science disciplines because of tremendous current differences from how media content in the past were organized, created and distributed “within just past generation” (Schultz & Sheffer, 2009). Second, Freedman and Shafer (2012) noted that scholars have barely scratched the surface in studying Kyrgyzstan. It may partly be explained that Kyrgyzstan has been closed to outsiders of the world until its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. During the Soviet Union period researchers undertook research studies but they were often forced to censor and manipulate their own findings (Tucker, 2014). Thus, this dissertation work attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge about perceived social and political changes (or lack of) among internet users in Kyrgyzstan as a result of internet penetration.

This dissertation identified that politically active internet users tend to be active offline as well. This is useful information for potential entities interested in political engagement, especially among younger generations. However, there was no relationship between civic engagements online with offline. Therefore, this civic engagement needs to be revisited in future studies in the context of this Central Asian country. This study also identified that Kyrgyz bloggers use the web space predominantly to share and express themselves. This study sought to know whether gender mattered in how Kyrgyz internet users blogged.

The practical implications of this work include the knowledge obtained as a result of this study can help potential local and foreign funders and universities assist in

designing and assessing citizen journalistic activities such as collective blogging on a certain issue/topic, crowdsourcing among civically and politically active internet users and/or fundraising for investigative projects.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI AUTHORIZATION TO
PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study titled: "Analysis of Kyrgyz Student Bloggers Usage Of the Web Space (blog) To Engage Civically and Politically"

1. Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine bloggers' usage of the web space (blog) in Kyrgyzstan to engage civically and politically.
2. Description of Study: You are expected to answer questions about your usage of the blog and engagement civically and politically. Questions ask you to select the level of agreement/disagreement. This survey is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey or to stop responding at any time. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.
3. Benefits: There will be no financial compensation offered as a result of their participation. However, they will benefit from taking a closer look at the research and learning how a survey can be conducted.
4. Risks: The survey presents minimal risk for participants. As stated above, it will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Once again, participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits.
5. Confidentiality: We will not collect any identifying information about you. It will be anonymous and the data will be aggregated into a statistical analysis program, SPSS. Once aggregated, the data on the website will be deleted from the server as well as from the researcher's password-protected computer.
6. Alternative Procedures: N/A
7. Participant's Assurance: Questions concerning the research should be directed to Bahtiyar Kurambaev at bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5116, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

If you agree to participate in the study, please click to the link below to answer online questionnaire.

Dissertation Research Questionnaire

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi. I will be shortly commencing my dissertation research "Analysis of Kyrgyz Student Bloggers Usage Of the Web Space To Engage Civically and Politically"

You are being asked to participate in a survey research examining bloggers' usage of the web space (blog) in Kyrgyzstan to engage civically and politically. This survey is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey or to stop responding at any time. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older.

The following information will remain strictly confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only, aggregated with other responses in the survey. Please answer the following questions:

Thank You

Bahtiyar Kurambaev

1. I am 18 or older

Yes No (if you selected "no" this is the end. Thank you)

2. Do you have a blog?

Yes No (if you selected "no" this is the end. Thank you)

Research Questionnaire

3. How often in a typical week do you use newspapers to follow public affairs and politics?
 - a) One or Not at all
 - b) Two Or Three Days
 - c) Four or Five Days
 - d) Six Days
 - e) Seven days
4. How often in a typical week do you use magazines to follow public affairs and politics?
 - a) One or Not at all
 - b) Two Or Three Days
 - c) Four or Five Days
 - d) Six Days
 - e) Seven days
5. How often in a typical week do you use radio news to follow public affairs and politics?
 - a) One or Not at all
 - b) Two Or Three Days
 - c) Four or Five Days
 - d) Six Days
 - e) Seven days
6. How often in a typical week do you use TV news to follow public affairs and politics?
 - a) One or Not at all
 - b) Two Or Three Days
 - c) Four or Five Days
 - d) Six Days
 - e) Seven days
7. "I do not think public officials care much about what people like me think"

1= Strong Agree
5=Strongly Disagree
8. People like me do not have any say about what the government does

1= Strong Agree

5=Strongly Disagree

9. “Some people seem to follow about what is going on in government most of the time, whether there is an election going on or not; others are not that interested. Would you say you follow what is going on in government:

- a) I do not know
- b) hardly at all
- c) only now and then
- d) some of the time
- e) most of the time

10. Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things”

1= Strongly Agree

5=Strongly Disagree

11. “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.”

1= Strongly Agree

5=Strongly Disagree

12. “I frequently share opinion of a political nature on my blog”

1= very unlikely

5=very likely

13. “I comment political opinion or post news story links about political affairs”

1= very unlikely

5=very likely

14. “I expressed opinion regarding government officials at any level via blogging.”

1= very unlikely

5=very likely

15. I frequently share opinion about public/social issues on my blog

1= very unlikely

5=very likely

16. I post news stories about public/social issues

1= very unlikely

5=very likely

17. I attend political meetings

1= very unlikely

5=very likely

18. I persuade others to support a candidate
1= very unlikely 5=very likely
19. I've contacted a politician or civil servant
1= very unlikely 5=very likely
20. I wear t-shirt or wear a badge with a political message
1= very unlikely 5=very likely
21. I have participated in illegal or legal demonstration or strike
1= very unlikely 5=very likely
22. I have attended campaign/volunteered
1= very unlikely 5=very likely

Demographic Questions

23. Gender

24. Student Status

- a) Freshman
- b) Sophomore
- c) Junior
- d) Senior
- e) Graduate student

25. Primary language of Blogging

- a) Kyrgyz
- b) Russian
- c) Uzbek
- d) English
- e) Other (please specify)

26. How long have you been blogging?

- a) Less than a month
- b) 1 month to less than 3 months
- c) 3 months to less than 6 months
- d) 6 months to less than a year
- e) One year to less than 3 years
- f) 3 years and more

27. How often do you typically post on your blog?

- a) Less than once a month
- b) Several times a month
- c) 2-6 times a week
- d) Once a day
- e) Multiple times a day

28. Why do you blog? (open-ended question)

29. What platform do you use for your blogging?

- a) Wordpress
- b) Blogger
- c) Kloop.kg
- d) LiveJournal
- e) Facebook Notes
- f) Tumblr
- g) Other (please specify)

Follow-Up

30. Would you be willing to participate in interview? If yes, please provide your email address below.

Email _____

Анализ использования блогов в веб-пространстве студентами Кыргызстана

Я кандидат докторских наук в университете Миссисипи, работаю над диссертацией на тему «Анализ использования блогов в веб-пространстве студентами Кыргызстана». Прошу Вас принять участие в опросе в области изучения блогеров и использования веб-пространств в Кыргызстане. Блог – это часто обновляющееся веб-страница. В публикациях в основном содержатся тексты, фотографии или видео ролики. Они также могут содержать ссылки на другие веб-сайты и позволять читателям взаимодействовать публично, комментируя друг друга. Для этого исследования, блогами могут считаться такие блоги как Wordpress, Blogger, Kloop.kg, LiveJournal, Facebook Notes, Tumblr и другие. Опрос является анонимным, никто кроме исследователя не сможет иметь доступ к Вашим ответам. Заполнение анкеты займет у Вас 15-20 минут. Вы можете не заполнять анкету или в любое время прекратить отвечать на вопросы. В данном опросе принимают участие студенты от 18 лет на добровольной основе. Полученная информация останется строго конфиденциальной и будет использоваться исключительно в статистических целях.

Если у Вас возникнут вопросы, касающиеся исследования, отправляйте их на электронный адрес bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu.

Заранее благодарю, Бахтияр Курамбаев

Мне 18 лет или старше

Да

Нет

Есть ли у Вас блог

- ☐ Да
- ☐ Нет

Q1 Как часто Вы следите за политикой и общественными делами в газетах в неделю?

- ☐ Никогда/ Один раз в неделю
- ☐ 2-3 раза в неделю
- ☐ 4-5 раза в неделю
- ☐ 6 раз в неделю
- ☐ Ежедневно

Q2 Как часто Вы следите за политикой и общественными делами в журналах в неделю?

- ☐ Никогда/ Один раз в неделю
- ☐ 2-3 раза в неделю
- ☐ 4-5 раза в неделю
- ☐ 6 раз в неделю
- ☐ Ежедневно

Q3 Как часто Вы следите за политикой и общественными делами по радио в неделю?

- ☐ Никогда/ Один раз в неделю
- ☐ 2-3 раза в неделю
- ☐ 4-5 раза в неделю
- ☐ 6 раз в неделю
- ☐ Ежедневно

Q4 Как часто Вы следите за политикой и общественными делами по телевидению в неделю?

- ☐ Никогда/Один раз в неделю
- ☐ 2-3 раза в неделю
- ☐ 4-5 раза в неделю
- ☐ 6 раз в неделю
- ☐ Ежедневно

Q5 Власти не считаются с мнениями простых людей

- ☐ Категорически не согласен
- ☐ Не согласен
- ☐ Воздержусь
- ☐ согласен
- ☐ Полностью согласен

Q6 У простых людей, как я, нет конкретного понятия, чем занимается правительство

- ☐ Категорически не согласен
- ☐ Не согласен
- ☐ Воздержусь
- ☐ согласен
- ☐ Полностью согласен

Q7 Одни люди интересуются работой правительства, а другие нет. А Вас интересует, что происходит в правительстве?

- ☐ Незнаю
- ☐ Очень редко
- ☐ Время от времени
- ☐ Иногда
- ☐ Почти всегда

Q8 Голосование - это единственный способ, где я могу выразить свои мысли, свое отношение к деятельности правительства

- ☐ Категорически не согласен
- ☐ Не согласен
- ☐ Воздержусь
- ☐ согласен
- ☐ Полностью согласен

Q9 Людям как я, сложно разобраться в политике и деятельности правительства

- ☐ Категорически не согласен
- ☐ Не согласен
- ☐ Воздержусь
- ☐ согласен
- ☐ Полностью согласен

Q10 Я часто делюсь мнением о политике в своем блоге

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Не знаю
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q11 Я комментирую политические действия или размещаю информацию о них в своем блоге

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Не знаю
- ☐ Вероятно

☐ Весьма вероятно

Q12 Я высказываю свое мнение о чиновниках через свой блог

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Не знаю
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q13 Я часто делюсь мнением о социальных/общественных делах в своем блоге

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Не знаю
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q14 Я размещаю новости об социальной/общественной деятельности

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Не знаю
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q15 Я посещаю политические собрания

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Нерешено
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q16 Я убеждаю остальных поддерживать кандидатов в депутаты

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Нерешено
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q17 Я общаюсь с политиками или государственными служащими

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Нерешено
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q18 Я ношу футболку или бейдж с названием политической партии или политическим сообщением

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Нерешено
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q19 Я участвовал в легальных и нелегальных демонстрациях или забастовках

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Нерешено
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q20 Я посещал избирательные компании/волонтерствовал

- ☐ Очень маловероятно
- ☐ Маловероятно
- ☐ Нерешено
- ☐ Вероятно
- ☐ Весьма вероятно

Q21 Ваш пол

- ☐ Женщина
- ☐ Мужчина

Q22 На каком курсе Вы учитесь?

- ☐ на первом курсе
- ☐ на втором курсе
- ☐ на третьем курсе
- ☐ на четвертом курсе
- ☐ на магистратуре или аспирантуре

Q23 Ваш основной язык ведения блога

- ☐ кыргызский
- ☐ русский
- ☐ узбекский
- ☐ английский
- ☐ другой

Q24 Как давно ведете блог?

- ☐ меньше 1 месяца
- ☐ от 1 месяца до 3 месяцев
- ☐ от 3 месяцев до 6 месяцев
- ☐ от 6 месяцев до 1 года
- ☐ от 1 года до 3 лет
- ☐ более 3 лет

Q25 Как часто Вы обновляете свой блог?

- ☐ меньше 1 раза в месяц
- ☐ каждый месяц
- ☐ каждую неделю
- ☐ 2-6 раз в неделю
- ☐ каждый день
- ☐ несколько раз в день

Q26 Почему Вы ведете блог?

Q27 Какую платформу Вы используете для ведения своего блога?

- ☐ Wordpress
- ☐ Blogger
- ☐ Kloop.kg
- ☐ LiveJournal
- ☐ Facebook Notes
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ другой

Q28 Хотели бы Вы участвовать в интервью? Если согласны, то укажите, пожалуйста, свой электронный адрес

APPENDIX C

Кыргызстандагы Студенттердин Интернет Блогдорун Колдонуусунун Анализи

Мен Миссисипи университетинде Массалык Коммуникация боюнча Докторантура программасында илимдин кандидатымын. Доктордук диссертациялык ишимдин темасы: “Кыргызстандагы студенттердин интернет-блогдорун колдонуусун анализдоо”. Кыргызстанда блоггерлердин веб-мейкиндигин колдонуу ыкмасын изилдоого силердин активдуу катышып беруунуздорду суранам. Блог – бул тез жаныртылып турган баракча. Билдируулордо озгочо тексттер, суроттор, видео роликтер жайгаштырылат. Алар башка веб-сайттарга шилтемелерди камтышы мумкун жана окуучуларга башка элдер менен тушундурмолор аркылуу байланышууга жардам берет. Бул изилдоого блог болуп Wordpress, Blogger, Kloop.kg, LiveJournal, Facebook Notes, Tumblr жана башка блогдору саналат.

Томонку суроолорго берилген жооптордон бир гана вариантын тандоо керек. Бул анкета анонимдуу болот. Сиздердин жообунарга изилдоочудон башка эч ким кийлигише албайт. Бул анкета 15-20 мунот убакытыңызды алат. Сиздердин бул изилдоого оз ыктыярынар менен катышасыңыздар, ошондой эле анкетадагы суроолорго жооп бербей же каалаган убакта токтотуп койсоңор да болот. Изилдоо ишине 18ден жогору жаштагы студенттер катыша алат. Сиздердин берген информациянар жашыруун болот жана изилдоо максатында гана колдонулат. Эгер изилдоо боюнча суроонуздар болсо, bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu электрондук адресине жиберсениздер болот. Изилдоого катышкандыгыңыз учун чон ыраазычылык билдирем.
Бахтияр Курамбаев.

Q1 Жашым 18де же андан жогору

- ☐ Ооба
- ☐ Жок

Q1 Сиздин блогунуз барбы?

- ☐ Бар
- ☐ Жок

Q1 Сиз гезиттерге жарыяланган коомдук жана саясий иштерге конул бурасызбы жана жумасына канча жолу гезит окуйсуз?

- ☐ Эч качан/Бир жумада бир жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 2-3 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 4-5 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 6 жолу
- ☐ Кунуго

Q2 Жумасына канча жолу журнал окуйсуз жана андагы коомдук жана саясий маалыматтарга кызыгасызбы?

- ☐ Эч качан/Бир жумада бир жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 2-3 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 4-5 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 6 жолу
- ☐ Кунуго

Q3 Радиодон берилуучу коомдук жана саясий уктурууларды жумада канча жолу угасыз?

- ☐ Эч качан/Бир жумада бир жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 2-3 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 4-5 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 6 жолу
- ☐ Кунуго

Q4 Коомдук жана саясий беруулорду телевидениеден бир жумада канча жолу коросуз?

- ☐ Эч качан/Бир жумада бир жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 2-3 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 4-5 жолу
- ☐ Бир жумада 6 жолу
- ☐ Кунуго

Q5 Бийлик жонокой элдин ой пикирин эске албайт

- ☐ Такыр макул эмесмин
- ☐ Макул эмесмин
- ☐ Пикирим жок
- ☐ Макулмун
- ☐ Толугу менен макулмун

Q6 Мамлекеттин иши кээ бир адамды кызыктырса, кээ бироону кызыктырбайт. А сиз кызыгасызбы?

- ☐ Билбейм
- ☐ Абдан аз
- ☐ Азыр гана жана анан
- ☐ Анда санда
- ☐ Копчулук убакта

Q7 Жонокой элдин окмотто болуп жаткан иштер жонундо тушунугу жок

- ☐ Такыр макул эмесмин
- ☐ Макул эмесмин
- ☐ Пикирим жок
- ☐ Макулмун
- ☐ Толугу менен макулмун

Q8 Шайлоо - бул озумдун оюмду билдире турган ыкма жана мамлекеттин ишине кылган мамилем

- ☐ Такыр макул эмесмин
- ☐ Макул эмесмин
- ☐ Пикирим жок
- ☐ Макулмун
- ☐ Толугу менен макулмун

Q9 Мага окшогондор мамлекеттин ишине жана саясатына тушуно бербейт.

- ☐ Такыр макул эмесмин
- ☐ Макул эмесмин
- ☐ Пикирим жок
- ☐ Макулмун
- ☐ Толугу менен макулмун

Q10 Мен блогумда саясат боюнча озумдун коз карашымды болушом

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q11 Мен блогумда саясатка болгон коз карашымды же жанылыктарды жайгаштырып, ой болушом

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q12 Блог аркылуу чиновниктерге болгон озумдун коз карашымды айта алам

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q13 Озумдун блогумда социалдык/коомдук проблемалар жана коз карашымды болушо алам.

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q14 Блогумда коомдук /социалдык маселелер жонундогу жанылыктарды жайгаштырам.

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q15 Мен саясий жыйналыштарга барып турам

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q16 Мен депутаттыкка талапкерлерди колдоого башкаларды ундойм

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q17 Мен саясаттагы жана мамлекеттик кызматкерлер менен байланышам

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q18 Мен саясий ундоо басылган футболкаларды киём жана бэйджиктерди тагынам

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q19 Мен мыйзам чегинде жана мыйзамсыз демонстрациялар менен забастовкаларга катышкам

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q20 Мен шайлоо компаниясына катышкам жана волонтер болгом

- ☐ Мумкун эмес
- ☐ Мумкун
- ☐ Чечиле элек
- ☐ Чындыкка жакын
- ☐ Ото эле чындыкка жакын

Q21 Жынысыңыз

- ☐ Аял
- ☐ Эркек

Q22 Сиз канчанчы курста окуйсуз?

- ☐ Биринчи курста
- ☐ Экинчи курста
- ☐ Учунчу курста
- ☐ Торчунчу курста
- ☐ Магистратурада же аспирантурада

Q23 Блогунузду кайсы тилде жазасыз?

- ☐ Кыргыз тилинде
- ☐ Орус тилинде
- ☐ Озбек тилинде
- ☐ Англис тилинде
- ☐ Башка тилде

Q24 Блогунуз качантан бери иштейт?

- ☐ Бир айдан азыраак болду
- ☐ Бир айдан уч айга чейин
- ☐ Уч айдан алты айга чейин
- ☐ Алты айдан бир жылга чейин
- ☐ Бир жылдан уч жылга чейин
- ☐ Уч жылдан бир нече жылга чейин

Q25 Блогунузга билдирууну канча жолу чыгарасыз?

- ☐ Бир кундо бир нече жолу
- ☐ Ар бир куну
- ☐ Жумасына 2-6 жолу
- ☐ Ар бир жумада
- ☐ Ар бир айда
- ☐ Бир айдан азыраак убакта

Q26 Эмне учун блог жазасыз?

Q27 Блогунузга кайсы платформаларды колдоносуз?

- ☐ Wordpress
- ☐ Blogger
- ☐ Kloop.kg
- ☐ LiveJournal
- ☐ Facebook Notes
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Башка

Q28 Сиз ушул темада интервью берууго катышкыңыз келеби? Катышкыңыз келсе, озунуздун электрондук адресинизди билдириниз.

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 14111801

PROJECT TITLE: Analysis of Kyrgyz Bloggers Usage of the Web Space (Blog) to Engage Civically and Politically

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Bahtiyar Kurambaev

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts and Letters

DEPARTMENT: Mass Communication and Journalism

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 12/02/2014 to 12/01/2015

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX E

The University of Southern Mississippi Mail - Re: Kurambaev: Seeki... <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=df92b10514&view=pt&s...>



Bahtiyar Kurambaev <bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu>

Re: Kurambaev: Seeking Your Permission

Mere Conroy <mere.conroy@gmail.com>

Sat, Nov 8, 2014 at 3:37 PM

To: Bahtiyar Kurambaev <bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu>

Hi Bahtiyar,

Thank you for your message. Yes, it would be fine for you to use our questionnaire for your own study. Do you need the full set of questions, or do you have what you need?

MC

On Sat, Nov 8, 2014 at 1:18 PM, Bahtiyar Kurambaev <bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu> wrote:

Dear Dr. Conroy,

My name is Baky (Bahtiyar Kurambaev). I am a doctoral student of Mass Communication and Journalism here at the University of Southern Mississippi (Hattiesburg, USA). I will be traveling soon to Kyrgyzstan to collect data for my research.

I am writing this message to seek your permission, whether it would be acceptable that I use your instrument/questionnaire statements that measured offline political participation in your publication "Facebook and political engagement: A study of online political group membership and offline political engagement." Would that be acceptable that I use your questionnaire statements and revise a bit to fit my own research goals? I understand you co-authored with Dr. Feezell and Dr. Guerrero.

I would like to analyze how student bloggers in Kyrgyz Republic (former Soviet Union country) use the web space to engage civically and politically.

Respectfully yours
Bahtiyar Kurambaev

APPENDIX F

The University of Southern Mississippi Mail - Re: Kurambaev: Seeki... <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=df92b10514&view=pt&s...>



Bahtiyar Kurambaev <bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu>

Re: Kurambaev: Seeking Your Permission

Louis Leung <louisleung@cuhk.edu.hk>

Sun, Nov 9, 2014 at 8:56 PM

To: Bahtiyar Kurambaev <bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu>

Dear Bahtiyar,

You have my permission to use the instrument to measure civic engagement in your research.

Regards,

Louis Leung

On Sun, Nov 9, 2014 at 4:27 AM, Bahtiyar Kurambaev <bahtiyar.kurambaev@eagles.usm.edu> wrote:

Dear Dr. Leung,

My name is Baky (Bahtiyar Kurambaev). I am a doctoral student of Mass Communication and Journalism here at the University of Southern Mississippi (Hattiesburg, USA). I will be traveling soon to Kyrgyz Republic to collect data for my research.

I am writing this message to seek your permission, whether it would be acceptable that I use your instrument/questionnaire statements that measured civic engagement in your New Media and Society publication titled "User-generated content on the internet: an examination of gratifications, civic engagement and psychological empowerment"

You measured civic engagement variable by combining media attentiveness, external political efficacy, interest in public affairs, and internal political efficacy. Would that be acceptable that I use your questionnaire statements and revise a bit to fit my own research goals?

Is this something we could discuss?

Respectfully yours

Bahtiyar Kurambaev
Hattiesburg, MS (USA)
University of Southern Mississippi

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